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ABSTRACT

Developed by the Nevada Competency-Based Adult High School Diploma (CBAHSD) Project, this teacher's guide accompanies a student handbook and ten curriculum guides which cover the following subjects: consumer education; environmental education; health; language arts; citizenship; American Government; United States History; mathematics; earth and physical science; and life science. This teacher's guide provides an overview of the CBAHSD Project including results of the statewide survey, assessment item construction, and the field test. Directions for using the curriculum guides and the student handbook are also included. (BM)

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NEVADA COMPETENCY-BASED ADULT HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROJECT

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Melinda K. Haynes
Project Director

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The ideas expressed herein are those of individual contributors to the Project, and not necessarily those of the Nevada Department of Education.

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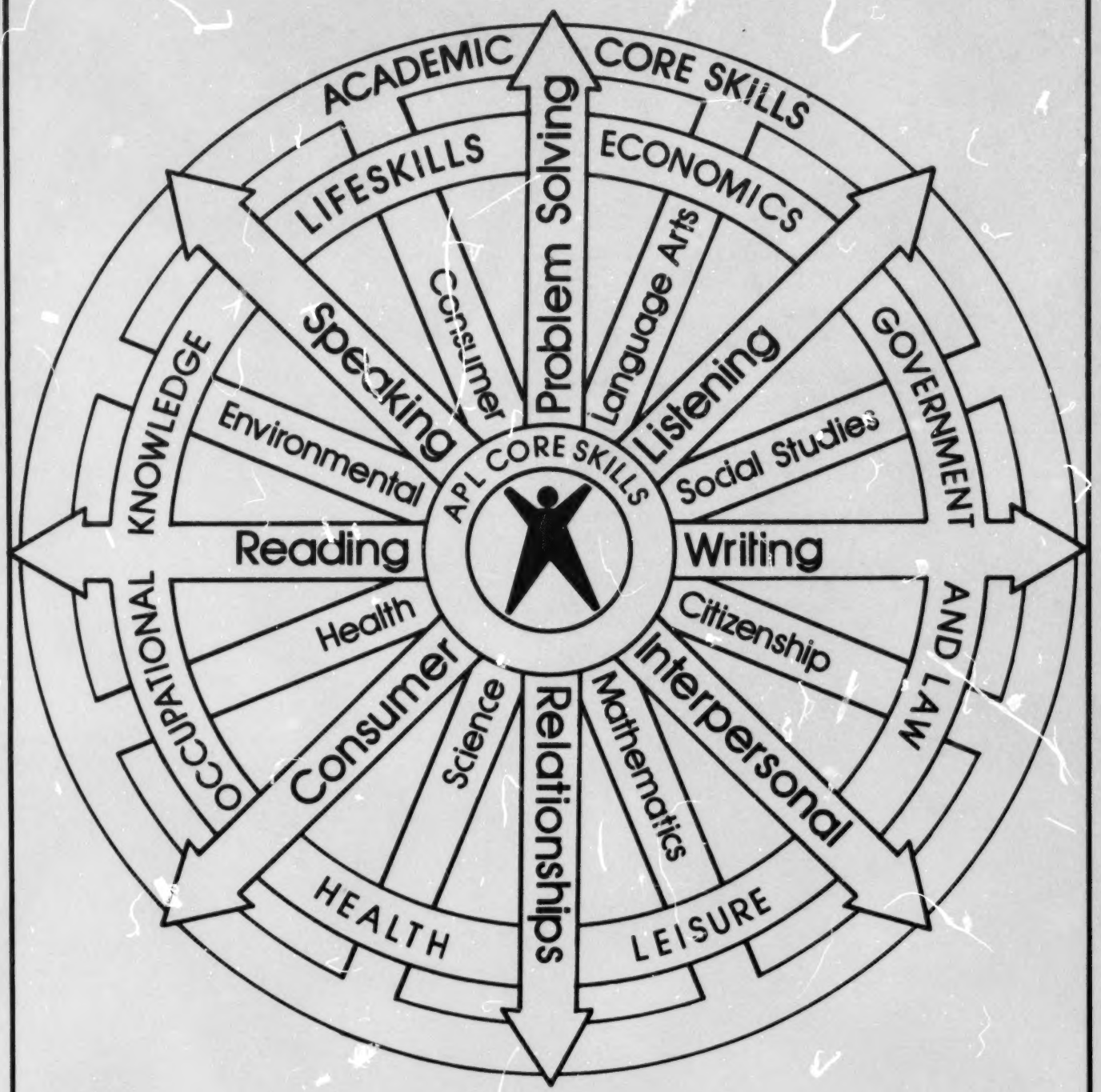

NEVADA CBAHSD PROJECT

NEVADA COMPETENCY—BASED ADULT HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

The Nevada Competency-Based Adult High School Diploma Project is a two year adult education 309 special demonstration and teacher training project at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas funded by the Nevada State Department of Education in the amount of $78,000. with a $2,000. two year teacher training component. The first year of the special demonstration component (FY 77-78) was spent in researching and identifying 12th grade exit level academic competencies and alternative assessment items in eight Nevada Revised Statutes and Board of Education mandated content areas: citizenship, consumer education, environmental education, health, language arts, mathematics, science (physical, earth, life), and social studies (U.S. history, U.S. and Nevada government).

Needs Identification and Research Process

Specialists in each content area were contracted to research and compile competency lists and to construct four alternative assessment items for each selected competency. To aid this process, the consultants were provided resource data from existing competency based education (CBE) projects, Adult Performance Level (APL) knowledge and skills areas, regular high school curriculum, objectives and items from the major objectives exchanges and testing companies and standardized tests in each area. The consultants also conferred with colleagues, teachers, administrators and students. Consultants were encouraged to list every competency which seemed important even if it was a lower level skill or in the preknowledge area of 12th grade exit level. The identified competencies were compiled into separate content area lists and then sent out on a statewide survey.

Statewide Survey

Given the funding limitations of the Project, the survey was not constructed to be statistically perfect or binding in respect to its results. The purpose was instead to involve as many people in the state as possible making them aware of the Project and to gain their imput. To insure the most participation possible, each content area, some having as many as 50 competencies, was broken down into several survey forms containing from six to 13 competencies usually pertaining to the same subcategory. Recipients (1771 across all eight content areas) were asked to award points to competencies they considered most important on the particular form that they received. If they received a form with ten competency statements, they were to award the most important competency ten points; the next most important received nine points and so one until the least important received only one point. Each recipient was encourage to make comments and to suggest additional competencies. There was a total of 747 responses across the eight content

area representing the following respondent types: secondary teachers, community college and adult (ABE) education teachers, college professors, government and community agencies, minority organizations, League of Women Voters, public officials, vocational programs teachers and administrators, personnel directors, adult and secondary students and Nevada Nursing Association. The final report for FY 77-78 details survey procedures and findings.

The survey was programmed on an SPSS computer package and the results given to each consultant. As the consultants were selected for their known expertise, the final selection and prioritizing of competencies remained with them. They were not bound by survey results, but indeed aided by them in making final decisions.

Assessment Item Construction

After the final lists were drafted, each consultant constructed four alternative assessment items for each competency. A test and measurement specialist conducted an in-service at this point to aid the consultants and attempt to secure item uniformity for content validity. The item construction presented special problems as the CBE approach calls for criterion referenced items and items of a more subjective nature due to the individualized approach required by the Project. Items were prepared to offer an adult student a variety of ways to demonstrate proficiency keeping in mind that students have different learning styles and will experience greater success if allowed to select items (or be given items) which utilize their best learning/demonstration channel such as writing, discussing or demonstrating. Given that the program is competency-based, assessment items attempt to test actual skills rather than test taking ability. Where possible, items are actual experiences or simulations of actual life roles experiences. The program emphasis is on application of learning; therefore, a great percentage of the items are on the application level.

Project Philosophical Approach and Methodology

The Nevada CBAHSD Project is an alternative approach to the traditional methods of gaining an adult high school diploma, but may be successfully combined with those traditional programs such as GED preparation for certificate or diploma, adult evening high school utilizing grading and credits or learning centers. As the model is competency based, the program content, instruction and assessment may be seen as necessarily eclectic to meet the individual needs of adult students. Each content area has been prepared to enable the adult student to successfully deal with present and future adult life concerns. It is felt that an adult needs a firm base in relevant academics not just minimal skills in "survival area". To leave an adult possessing the potential on a minimal skills level is a disservice to that adult and to society. Present day living requires well refined skills in order to simply survive and those very skills may be tomorrow's sub-survival skills. An adult must be educated holistically allowing him/her the options and alter-

natives of the present and future. (Refer to the Project's model depicting the Project's holistic orientation of adult education needs.)

The academic core competencies were selected and constructed to contain the basic fund of information which would give the adult student a secure base from which to operate in dealing with the constantly changing life knowledge areas. In this age of "knowledge explosion", it should be understood that the academic core may be expanded as time and need indicates; that the core is never a static entity, but does attempt to impart time-proven basic principles that should apply to future concerns. The academic competencies have been constructed in terms of relevance to present day concerns and preparation for the future problem solving. All academic areas utilize the APL skills areas which are seen as the means and the end or goals of education according to the Project's philosophy. This is an alternative program. It is not for every adult student just as a regular high school diploma program is not for every adult student.

Field Test/Pilot

The competencies and items are being field-tested at Washoe Adult High School in Reno, Nevada. The Pilot began September 1, 1978 and terminated May 17, 1979. Pilot teachers were required to keep records of all enrolled students which include performances, attendance and attitudes. The students themselves are asked to critique the program, competencies and items.

The Pilot students included adults, regular evening high school students and some special "fee" daytime high school students.

The first three months of the field test demonstrated the need for revision of competencies and items in the areas of social studies, science, citizenship, consumer education and language arts. The Pilot instructors were contracted for the revisions as their experiences in teacher adults and participation in the Pilot gave them an excellent sense of what was needed.

The field test results are detailed in the Projects FY 78-79 report and may be obtained from the Nevada State Department of Education.

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TEACHER'S GUIDE USE AND DIRECTIONS

This is an alternative approach to obtaining a high school diploma. This program is not for every student. It is a competency-based individualized program. It is based on the premise that if the individual can demonstrate the required knowledge of the competencies in this program, he or she deserves the credit. This competency-based method of education will be of benefit to adults in two ways: if the student outside of the academic atmosphere (or previously in the academic environment without receiving credit) has obtained knowledge and can demonstrate that knowledge of these competencies, the individual can receive deserved credit for that knowledge; and the individual who has yet to master these competencies knows exactly what he or she must do to complete the program. The program is based on a demonstration of knowledge rather than hours of time spent.

Another important advantage of this packaged program is that students have the capability to achieve these goals at an individualized pace and environment. The ability to individualize all phases of the package are important to its success. This complete package of competencies and test items is not designed to be administered by a machine in word for word form or by an individual who is qualified in a totally unrelated field. This package is intended to be individualized in its administration. Each student will have different strengths, various opportunities to obtain knowledge about the competencies, and a variety of methods and abilities of demonstrating knowledge. The teacher must recognize this and make every effort to insure this individualization. The primary tool which is recommended for insuring this individualization is through oral communication. As much as possible the teacher should combine oral skills with the more traditional writing. An effort should be made to identify (during the counselling in-take process) the students' most successful learning and testing modes. The program has attempted to present a variety of possible methods for demonstrating competency: writing - essays, reports, orally - discussions, demonstrations - charting, diagraming, simulations, role-playing. Where possible, the student should be given an opportunity to choose the manner in which he/she will demonstrate knowledge of a competency.

Pre- and Post-Testing

The performance indicators suggested in the pre- and post-testing box are believed to represent the highest level of content validity for a particular competency. Nonsuggested performance indicators may still be considered for administration in individual situations at the instructor's discretion.

As this is a competency-based program, what constitutes passing an indicator hence a competency? Is it all or nothing? This program is structured to be so individualized that an instructor should be able to easily determine if the student is able to adequately perform the competency. The stu-

dent may re-take an indicator until he/she passes it; that is, is able to do it well enough that the instructor is sure the competency has been learned.

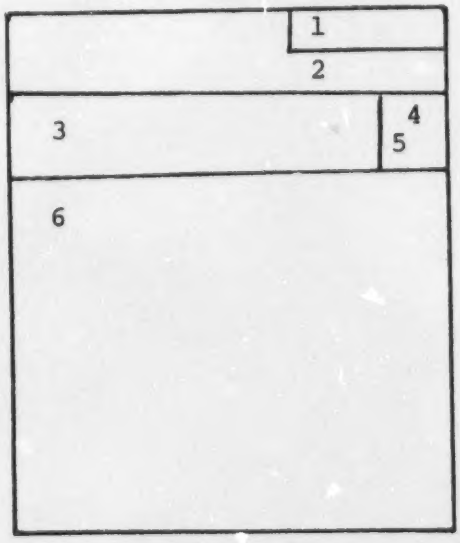
The indicators contain many objective-type performance indicators which are useful pre-test items, but passing a competency should never be determined by performance on one or two such items only. An objective-type indicator should be coupled with a teacher-student discussion regarding the student's answers. This not only aids the teacher in determining exactly what the student does and doesn't know, but enables the student to further demonstrate his/her knowledge and clear up any misconceptions.

Several of the field test instructors recommend a score of at least 90% to be passing on objective-type indicators, but require additional proof of knowledge. Ultimately, the decision of determining competency rests with the instructor for in such an individualized program, the assessment must be necessarily individualized, more subjective than objective.

Program Format

Each content area contains competencies and performance indicators followed by an answer section. The competencies should usually be taught in the order in which they appear unless otherwise noted. If students pre-test out of certain competencies, the competencies they do not pre-test pass should be presented in order. Caution should be exercised in presenting the remaining competencies to make sure the student gains and demonstrates a holistic or related sense of the content area rather than a series of disjointed competencies and tasks which he/she may complete, forget and perceive as unrelated.

Each competency statement is formated in the following configuration:



(figure 1)

Explanation to Figure 1

1. Content area

2. Sub-category (topic)

3. Competency statement

4. Competency reference number
   (keyed to answer sheet)

5. Suggested pre- and post-test performance indicators

6. Four performance indicators

DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENT PACKET

Upon registration the student will be given a Student Handbook containing:

1. How to Use the Program
2. Procedure
3. 10 competency lists
4. 10 Student Record Sheets

The student is encouraged to keep the entire package in a three ring binder with index tabs separating the content areas. It is recommended that the student keep all assignments, handouts and other applicable materials in the appropriate content area section. This type of organization insures the student's having what he/she needs--if he/she brings the binder to class. Encourage him/her to do so.

Upon entering a particular class, the student is asked to read through his/her list of competencies marking those he/she would like to take the test on first. The student will indicate his pre-test preferences to the instructor who will administer the tests.

The student's performance will be recorded on the Student Record Sheet (see student packet) and kept by the instructor until all competencies have been passed. The sheet is then signed and dated by both the instructor and the student and becomes part of the student's permanent record for the course.

The Student Record Sheet should be reviewed by the instructor and student each class meeting. This keeps the student apprised of his progress. He is able to see his achievements and the instructor is able to plan for the next lesson.

NOTE: Many instructors compile a packet or module of readings, projects, references and activities for each competency. The student may be referred to the packet to complete the appropriate assignments enabling him to prepare for the post-test.

SPO, Carson City, Nevada, 1979